

July 30, 1998

## **Democrats Won't Take "Yes" for an Answer**

### **Minority Once Again Rejects Republican Offer to Consider Healthcare Bill**

Senate Democrats yesterday again rejected an offer by Senate Majority Leader Lott to take up the issue that they once claimed to be a top priority this year. That's a strange way to treat a priority; however, it's not the first time they have done so. Yesterday evening's rejection marks the fourth time that Senate Democrats have rejected a formal unanimous consent offer from the Majority Leader. In fact, Senate Democrats have rejected in turn the meeting of every demand they have made on this issue.

Why won't Senate Democrats take "yes" for an answer? Perhaps it's because Senate Republicans are asking the wrong question. Senate Republicans thought their colleagues were serious about policy; evidently what the Senate's minority party really cares about is a political issue for the upcoming election.

- When Senate Democrats demanded managed care legislation in this area, the Senate Majority Leader in January appointed a task force led by Assistant Majority Leader Nickles to develop legislation.
- When Senate Democrats demanded a vote on this legislation, the Senate Majority Leader offered them a vote.
- When Senate Democrats demanded debate with amendments, the Senate Majority Leader offered them debate with amendments.
- When Senate Minority Leader stated that "July is going to be HMO month," Senate Majority Leader met all his demands in July.

Senator Daschle: You asked for legislation, you asked for a vote, you asked for amendments, you asked for debate, and it's July — where are you?

#### **Chronology of Democrat Hypocrisy**

- January 13, 1998: Senate Majority Leader Lott appoints Senator Nickles to head up a task force on healthcare reform.

- March 31, 1998: Senators Daschle and Kennedy introduce S. 1890 with 20 Democrat colleagues — less than half the Democrat caucus — and demand a vote.
- May 13: Senator Daschle states this bill is “among Senate Democrats’ top priorities.”
- June 18: Majority Leader Lott offers the first unanimous consent request to debate and vote on healthcare. Democrats do not respond, despite the fact that it meets their demands.
- June 24: Majority Leader Lott reiterates June 18 offer. Democrats finally respond by rejecting it.
- June 25: Senator Daschle is quoted, “July is going to be HMO month. It is going to be managed care debate time.” [*CongressDaily*]
- July 7: Senator Daschle offers S. 1890 (modified) as an amendment (amendment #3063) to the VA-HUD appropriations bill.
- July 16: Majority Leader Lott moves to vote on the Daschle amendment; Senator Daschle withdraws his amendment.
- July 17: Senators Lott and Nickles introduce the Republican task force bill, S. 2330, with 45 Republican cosponsors and offer votes on their bill and the Democrat bill.
- July 20: Senators Daschle and Kennedy demand up to 40 amendments to the bills — despite the fact that both sides had already had every possibility to include any provision they desired into their own bills.
- July 29: Majority Leader Lott offers another unanimous consent request, this time with three amendments per side. Senate Minority Leader Daschle rejects a unanimous consent agreement for the fourth time.

## **Senate Democrats Take A Walk**

It’s been four months since Senate Democrats offered their bill. There have been four formal opportunities from Senate Majority Leader Lott for Democrats to vote on their own legislation, and we’ve gotten four rejections from Senate Democrats. Three amendments could be offered to each bill. Again, rejection from Senate Democrats.

Senate Majority Leader has repeatedly gone the extra mile and every time Senate Democrats have walked two miles farther away.

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Staff Contact: Dr. J.T. Young, 224-2946